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GENERAL NOTES.

Variation of Latitude.—In the *Astronomische Nachrichten* No. 4287 Dr. ALBRECHT publishes an article giving provisional results of the International Latitude Service on the southern parallel during the interval 1906.4 to 1908.4. The programme of work for the southern parallel is similar to that of the northern parallel and the chief interest in the results centers about the z-term, which represents that part of the variation which is independent of the longitude of the place of observation, and which, at one time, was thought to be due to a periodic movement of the center of gravity of the earth along the axis of rotation. The observations show this term to have practically the same value for the southern parallel as for the northern, which shows that the above-mentioned hypothesis cannot be a true one. There is a phase difference of about one tenth of a year between the two values of the z-term, but the number of observations made on the southern parallel is not sufficiently great to demonstrate the reality of this part of the phenomenon.

Dr. ALBRECHT makes the statement that the observations at Bayswater, Australia, would be discontinued at the end of January, 1909. The work at Oncativo, however, was taken over by the Argentine Republic in July, 1908, and will be continued for an indefinite length of time. S. D. T.

Notes from "Science."—Mr. R. JAMES WALLACE, who has for several years past been engaged in photographic research at the Yerkes Observatory, as instructor in photophysics, has resigned his position there to become director of the research laboratory of the Cramer Dry Plate Company, of St. Louis. It is a promising evidence of appreciation of research that a commercial company engages the services of a scientific investigator for the improvement and further development of its products.

Dr. GEORGE E. HALE, of the Solar Observatory of Mount Wilson, has been appointed a delegate to represent the National Academy of Sciences at the Darwin Celebration at Cambridge.

Solar Eclipse.—In *Monthly Notices,* November, 1908, Dr. DOWNING gives details of the total solar eclipse of 1911, April 28, at Neiafu, on Vavau Island, in the South Pacific. The meteorological conditions are only fairly promising.

Professor W. W. PAYNE has retired, under the Carnegie Foundation, from the directorship of the Goodsell Observatory of Carlton College, and is succeeded by Dr. H. C. WILSON. Professor PAYNE still retains the ownership and editorship of *Popular Astronomy.*

Professor E. BECKER, Director der Kaiserlichen Universitätes Sternwarte zu Strassburg, has been made professor emeritus and has been succeeded by Professor J. BAUSCHINGER, Director des Astronomischen Recheninstituts in Berlin.

Dr. SIDNEY D. TOWNLEY, of Leland Stanford Junior University, was recently promoted to an associate professorship in applied mathematics.

Astrophysics, Proposed Professorship at Cambridge.—The Council of the Senate report that they have had under their consideration the position of the study of astrophysics in the university, in connection with the offer of the Royal Society to give to the university the equipment of Sir WILLIAM HUGGINS's observatory.

The study of astrophysics, which is growing rapidly and resulting in large accessions to knowledge, has a special interest for the University of Cambridge, from the fact that it is so intimately associated with the work of Sir GEORGE STOKES on the meaning of the Fraunhöfer lines in the solar spectrum. In 1889 the late Mr. R. S. NEWALL gave to the university a large refracting telescope specially adapted for the study of stellar physics, and the sole charge of this telescope was entrusted to his son, Mr. H. F. NEWALL, under conditions which he generously accepted. For the last eighteen years the work of the department has been most successfully carried out by Mr. H. F. NEWALL, and important scientific results have been obtained. In 1905 the department was strengthened by the McClean bequest of £5000 for the provision of improved instrumental equipment for the Newall observatory, and now the possession by the university of the instruments used by Sir WILLIAM HUGGINS will further increase the means of observation at the disposal of the department.

In 1907 an assistant in astrophysics was appointed for five years, who is paid £100 a year by the university and £100 a year by Mr.

NEWALL. The university is fortunate in having for so long a time had the advantage of the gratuitous and most generous services of one who stands in the front rank of astrophysicists, and Mr. NEWALL'S eminence in the study is undoubtedly one of the reasons which prompted the Royal Society—at the suggestion, as the council understand, of Sir WILLIAM HUGGINS himself—to make their recent offer.

The Council of the Senate are of opinion that the time is opportune for giving further recognition in Cambridge to astrophysics. They have consulted the General Board of Studies, and with their approval desire to recommend to the Senate the establishment of a professorship of astrophysics, without stipend, and limited to the tenure of office of the first professor, in accordance with Statute B. The Council recommend accordingly.—*London Standard.*

Royal Astronomical Society.—The annual meeting of the Royal Astronomical Society was held at Burlington House February 12th, Mr. H. F. NEWALL, the president, occupying the chair.

The president, on behalf of the members, extended a cordial welcome to Professor O. BACKLUND, Director of the Observatory, Pulkowa, Russia, to whom the society's gold medal had been awarded for his researches concerning the comet which was first observed in 1786, and has borne the name of Encke since that astronomer in 1819 established its periodicity. Professor BACKLUND had calculated the perturbations from 1819, and had demonstrated that the motion of the comet was constant to 1858, and then, after having diminished, was again constant during the period between 1851 and 1891. He had given an interesting account of the value of the forces opposing the motion of the comet, and had applied himself to a difficult branch of research with a measure of devotion and success which made it the desire of the society to express its admiration of his scientific achievements. Amid loud cheers the president handed the gold medal to Professor BACKLUND.

The Jackson-Gwilt bronze medal and gift were handed to Mr. P. MELOTTE, of the Royal Observatory, Greenwich, in recognition of his discovery of the eighth satellite of *Jupiter.*

The president, in an address, suggested for consideration the question whether the main characteristics of the spectroscopic phenomena of the Sun and stars are dictated mainly by matter constantly streaming in upon them, and not by matter within them.

A ballot resulted in the election of Sir DAVID GILL as president of the society for the coming year.—*London Times.*